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THOMAS WARTON'S POETRY AND ITS RELATION TO THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

Thomas Warton first attempted to express his genius in poetry, but, both because the age in which he lived was unfavorable to poetry, and because, as Christopher North said, "the gods had made him poetical, but not a poet," he turned later to criticism and history, where he won more immediate as well as more enduring fame. He did not, however, wholly cease to write poetry, which he somewhat diffidently submitted to public approval, and which shows the development of his tastes and interests and the growth of his romantic tendencies. That Warton does not loom so large in the history of poetry as he does in that of criticism and scholarship we may explain by the fact that he very early neglected poetry for work which was more acceptable to his generation. But if the importance of his poetry is not comparable to that of his other work, neither can it be dismissed as insignificant. Compared with his achievements in other fields of literature, it is obscured by their greater value; but compared with contemporary poetry, it assumes a more significant place.

Warton's most considerable contributions to the new movement were in developing the Gothic or mediæval element, encouraging the nature school of poetry, and giving impetus to the sonnet revival. Beside this, his verse illustrates more fully than that of any of his contemporaries the whole change that was taking place in English poetry; it embodies practically every tendency of the new movement: the repudiation of the pseudo-classical models, the Spenserian and Miltonic revivals, the return to nature, the cult of solitude, the melancholy of the moonlight and graveyard schools, the interest in the supernatural, and the Gothic revival. While Warton lacked the lyrical sweetness and poetic insight of his friend Collins, whose qualities he could at least appreciate, and the poetic fire and inspiration of Gray, to whom he paid the tribute of a sonnet, these are the poets with whom one feels bound to compare him. If he had less poetical genius than either of them, he had a greater variety of inter-

ests to which he applied it, and he made distinguished contributions in the direction of his principal interests,—nature and the past.

Warton's romantic tendencies were partly inherited. His father, Thomas Warton senior, though not a gifted poet, had a taste for mediæval subjects, which he transmitted to his sons. Almost twenty years before Percy¹ and Gray² were writing their "runic" odes, and even before their chief source of inspiration, Mallet's *Histoire de Dannemarck*, was published, the elder Warton³ had versified two Latin translations of a portion of a northern song which Sir William Temple had quoted approvingly as containing a "vein truly Poetical,"⁴ and he thus introduced the runic element into poetry before northern mythology came to be studied seriously. He was not so strikingly novel, but he was almost equally romantic, in contributing a poem to the Spenserian revival.⁵ Although he did not imitate Milton, he is known to have been devoted to his work, including the minor poems, which contributed so largely to the new movement, and his sons claimed for him the merit of having brought the *Juvenilia* to Pope's attention.⁶

In addition to this poetical inheritance, there seems to have been very early fostered in the sons of the first Thomas Warton a love for the past, for old romances wherein the glorious deeds of chivalry were immortalized, and for the visible remains of former days, the feudal castles and Gothic churches of the Middle Ages. It is probable that the elder Warton influenced his son much more by developing and cultivating such natural tastes than through his own Spenserian and runic poems, for the younger Warton seems not to have known of their existence until after his father's death,⁷ and by that time at least the

¹ See Phelps, *English Romantic Movement*, p. 142.

² See Gray's *Works*, ed. Gosse, Vol. I, p. 60, and Walpole's *Letters*, ed. Toynbee, Vol. V, p. 55, and Vol. VII, p. 175.

³ Warton's poems were published posthumously in 1748. He died in 1745.

⁴ Temple's *Works*, ed. 1720, Vol. I, p. 216.

⁵ *Philander: An Imitation of Spenser, on the Death of Mr. Levinz* (in 1706).

⁶ T. Warton's *Milton*, 2nd ed. (1791), Pref., p. x.

⁷ Wooll, *Biographical Memoirs of Joseph Warton* (1806), pp. 214-5.

Pleasures of Melancholy and the *Ode to Morning* had been written.

"Mr Warton possessed a classic taste with a Gothic Muse," said a reviewer in the *Critical Review*.⁸ While we feel certain that Warton's taste was Gothic as well as classic, we grant that the critic was right in recognizing in his poetry a marked classical element. But by classical we mean what the critic probably did not, genuine as well as pseudo-classical characteristics. Thomas Warton's education was largely classical. He had an intimate acquaintance with both the Greek and the Latin poets and was himself, not only in his youth, when Latin verses were a large part of his school exercises, but even all through his life, the author of Latin poetry of no little merit. His first poetical attempt was in translation of an epigram of Martial; one of his best humorous pieces⁹ was the development of a Latin epigram of his own composition, and all his works abound in classical allusions, not simply in the conventional fashion of all the pseudo-classical poets, but with the warmth and freshness of real intimacy with classical literature.

I.

Although I speak of Warton as a romantic poet, it cannot, of course, be expected that a novice whose first important poem was written the year following the death of Pope should be wholly free from the characteristics of pseudo-classical verse. A strong love for the Gothic in every form, and for Spenser and Milton in particular, even unlimited enthusiasm, imagination, and poetic genius cannot produce a complete revolution in poetry without a preliminary period of experimentation in which the poetry of the age plays a prominent part. And Warton's poetical genius was not of that robust, vigorous sort. Except in his principal contribution, the Gothic element, he was never strikingly original.

Warton's first poetry was therefore experimental, imitative. It shows a confusion of pseudo-classicism, real classicism, and romanticism. Much of it consists of poetical exercises in

⁸ Series 2, Vol. X, p. 20.

⁹ *The Progress of Discontent*.

various metres and styles, ranging from satires in the manner of Pope and of Swift to melancholy and nature poems under the influence of Milton, from ode to sonnet, and from a translation of Job in heroic couplets to imitations of Theocritus and Horace in the Miltonic fashion, and an inscription with something of the clarity of the Greek. In all of these Warton was evidently trying to find himself. Many of these first poems are extremely significant in showing how early certain aspects of Warton's romanticism appeared.

The first long poem, the *Pleasures of Melancholy*,¹⁰ savors decidedly of Milton's minor poems in tone and diction, though the title and the form were obviously directly suggested by Akenside's much less romantic *Pleasures of Imagination*. The poem follows the general plan of *Il Penseroso*, being a description of the various pleasures which the man devoted to melancholy contemplation may enjoy, and it is full of personifications of abstractions and Miltonic epithets and diction. A few typical passages will illustrate both Warton's command of blank-verse harmony and the influence of Milton: the invocation—

Mother of musings, Contemplation sage,
Whose grotto stands upon the topmost rock
Of Teneriff ;—

and distinct references to particular poems, such as—

the dazzling spells
Of wily Comus cheat th' unweeting eye
With blear illusion, and persuade to drink
That charmèd cup, which Reason's mintage fair
Unmoulds, and stamps the monster on the man ;¹¹—

and—

The taper'd choir, at the late hour of pray'r,
Oft let me tread, while to th' according voice
The many-sounding organ peals on high,
The clear slow-dittied chaunt, or varied hymn,
Till all my soul is bath'd in ecstasies,
And lapp'd in Paradise.¹²

The whole poem is saturated, too, with the melancholy of the graveyard school of poets, and passages can be selected which

¹⁰ Written in 1745 ; published anonymously in 1747.

¹¹ Cf. *Comus*, lines 154-5 and 528-30.

¹² Cf. *Il Penseroso*, lines 161-6.

seem to have been directly inspired by various of their poems. The young poet—Warton was seventeen when he wrote the *Pleasures of Melancholy*—gives every evidence of having tried his hand in the style of each of them; but he combined the results into a whole with some characteristic additions of his own. Among the lines that show Warton's debt to the early melancholy school the following are obviously imitative of Parnell and Young:—

But when the world
Is clad in Midnight's raven-colour'd robe,
'Mid hollow charnel let me watch the flame
Of taper dim, shedding a livid glare
O'er the wan heaps; while airy voices talk
Along the glimm'ring walls; or ghostly shape,
At distance seen, invites with beck'ning hand
My lonesome steps, thro' the far-winding vaults.
Nor undelightful is the solemn moon
Of night when haply wakeful from my couch
I start: lo, all is motionless around!
Roars not the running wind; the sons of men
And every beast in mute oblivion lie;
All nature's hush'd in silence and in sleep.
O then how fearful is it to reflect,
That thro' the still globe's awful solitude
No being wakes but me!

The description of "fall'n Persepolis" was surely written with Dyer's *Ruin of Rome* fresh in memory:—

Here columns heap'd on prostrate columns, torn
From their firm base, increase the mould'ring mass.
Far as the sight can pierce, appear the spoils
Of sunk magnificence! a blended scene
Of moles, fanes, arches, domes and palaces,
Where with his brother Horror, Ruin sits.

In his second Miltonic poem, the *Ode on the Approach of Summer*, some passages of which are little more than rearrangements of Milton's thought and even diction, it is noticeable that Warton was somewhat truer to the spirit of his model than most of Milton's imitators. His melancholy is not so obtrusive, and he retains much of Milton's real classicism, with which he was in close sympathy. The following passage, selected almost at random, shows at once the closeness of the imitation, Warton's devotion to the cult of solitude, and his classicism;—

Or bear me to yon antique wood,
Dim temple of sage Solitude!
There within a nook most dark,
Where none my musing mood may mark,
Let me in many a whisper'd rite
The Genius old of Greece invite,
With that fair wreath my brows to bind,
Which for his chosen imps he twin'd,
Well nurtur'd in Pierian lore,
On clear Illissus' laureate shore.

Warton was, however, more interested in the mysteries of native superstition than in Grecian rites. Stirred by reading old romances he sighed for "more romantic scenes," for the—

. . . . fairy bank, or magic lawn,
By Spenser's lavish pencil drawn:
Or bow'r in Vallombrosa's shade
By legendary pens pourtray'd.

He longed to visit—

The rugged vaults, and riven tow'rs
Of that proud castle's painted bow'rs,
Whence Hardyknute, a baron bold,
In Scotland's martial days of old,
Descended from the stately feast,
Begirt with many a warrior guest,
To quell the pride of Norway's king,
With quiv'ring lance and twanging string.

And when he continued,—

Might I that legend find,
By fairies spelt in mystic rhymes,
To teach enquiring later times,
What open force, or secret guile,
Dash'd into dust the solemn pile,—

he had passed from the influence of Milton and Spenser into his own best loved poetical province, the glories of the Gothic past.¹⁸

¹⁸*The Pleasures of Melancholy* also gives some evidence of Warton's interest in native mythology: 'Contemplation' is represented as having been found by a Druid—

Far in the hollow glade of Mona's woods,—

and carried to the "close shelter of his oaken bow'r," where she—

lov'd to lie
Oft deeply list'ning to the rapid roar
Of wood-hung Meinai, stream of Druids old,

Even more important than the fact that Warton contrived to preserve a more objective tone in his melancholy, and to add a new Gothic note to it, is the fact that he may fairly be credited with having influenced pretty directly the greatest poem of the elegiac school, Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. The following passage from the *Pleasures of Melancholy*, which adds to the conventional melancholy of Warton's models a good deal of his own religious awe and feeling for ancient Gothic ruins, seems also to sound the keynote of the later poem:—

Beneath yon ruin'd abbey's moss-grown piles
Oft let me sit, at twilight hour of eve,
Where thro' western window the pale moon
Pours her long-levell'd rule of streaming light;
While sullen sacred silence reigns around,
Save the lone screech-owl's note, who builds his bow'r
Amid the mould'ring caverns dark and damp,
Or the calm breeze, that rustles in the leaves
Of flaunting ivy, that with mantle green
Invests some wasted tow'r.

The similarity of some lines in the *Elegy* is too close to be dismissed as accidental, and the fact that Gray took up again in the winter of 1749—two years after *The Pleasures of Melancholy* was published—the poem he had barely begun several years earlier, increases the likelihood of his having had Warton's poem in mind as he finished his own:—

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

If Milton was largely responsible for the melancholy school of poetry which revelled in midnight scenes of gloom, with Warton at least his influence was partly counterbalanced by Spenser's directing attention to brighter and more joyous themes. Warton's preferring Spenser to Pope is extremely significant of his taste, and of the advances he had made thus early in rejecting the old school for the coming one. For his taste he

gave a very romantic reason: warmer passions are aroused by the artless magic of the *Faerie Queene* than by the artificial brilliance of the *Rape of the Lock*:—

Thro' Pope's soft song tho' all the Graces breathe,
And happiest art adorn his Attic page;
Yet does my mind with sweeter transport glow,
As at the root of mossy trunk reclin'd,
In magic Spenser's wildly-warbled song
I see deserted Una wander wide
Thro' wasteful solitudes, and lurid heaths,
Weary, forlorn; than when the fated fair
Upon the bosom bright of silver Thames
Launches in all the lustre of brocade,
Amid the splendors of the laughing Sun.
The gay description palls upon the sense,
And coldly strikes the mind with feeble bliss.¹⁴

Spenser's influence is apparent also in some of Warton's descriptions of nature, which add to the imitation of such a model the author's evident familiarity with and admiration of rural scenes. These descriptions from nature are a significant characteristic of Warton's poetry. A typical example is the *Ode to Morning*, a simple description of a familiar morning scene in the valley of the Cherwell in which, besides much artificial diction, there is genuine poetic feeling:—

Once more the vernal sun's ambrosial beams
The fields as with a purple robe adorn:
Cherwell, thy sedgy banks and glist'ring streams
All laugh and sing at mild approach of morn;
Thro' the deep groves I hear the chaunting birds,
And thro' the clover'd vale the various-low'ing herds.

The influence of Spenser is further shown in *A Pastoral in the Manner of Spenser* and an *Ode sent to Mr. Upton on his edition of the Faerie Queene*. The first is in the short stanza used by Spenser in the *Shepheard's Calendar*, *January*, and *December*, and the diction is full of such archaisms as 'losell,' 'yblent,' 'besprent,' 'eyrie,' 'dight.'¹⁵ The second is not so much imi-

¹⁴This brief but happy comparison of Pope's verse with Spenser's expresses the same idea that was given fuller discussion nearly ten years later by the poet's older brother in his revolutionary essay on Pope. (Joseph Warton, *Essay on Pope*, Vol. I, 1756.)

¹⁵Warton does not display in the poem a very accurate knowledge of Spenserian diction, for he is guilty of such forms as "did deemen" and "did depeinten."

tative of Spenser as expressive of Warton's admiration for his magic beauties, and of his appreciation of Upton's effort to make them intelligible to readers of his day:—

As oft, reclin'd on Cherwell's shelving shore,
I trac'd romantic Spenser's moral page,
And sooth'd my sorrows with the dulcet lore
Which Fancy fabled in her elfin age;

Much would I grieve, that envious Time so soon
O'er the lov'd strain had cast his dim disguise;
As lowering clouds, in April's brightest noon,
Mar the pure splendors of the purple skies.

Sage Upton came, from every mystic tale
To chase the gloom that hung o'er fairy ground:
His wizard hand unlocks each guarded vale,
And opes each flowery forest's magic bound.

It is interesting to observe that both of Warton's principal contributions to the new movement in poetry, the love of the past and of nature, were, even in his early work, neither accidental nor unconscious. Although the first was not so evident in this as in the later work, yet in the *Ode on the Approach of Summer*, a poem which is in some respects the most important in his first period, we find what appears to be Warton's poetical programme. This poem was published in his collection called the *Union*, where it was modestly ascribed to a "Gentleman from the University of Aberdeen"; and the preface hinted at a long poem by the same author soon to be published should this meet with favor. We seem to have in this ode a suggestion of what was to have been the nature of that "noble and more important poem." For, near its close, when the poet has ensconced himself in his ideal retreat, he promises to dedicate his days to poetry,—poetry which shall celebrate England's glorious past:—

Nor let me fail, meantime, to raise
The solemn song to Britain's praise:
To spurn the shepherd's simple reeds,
And paint heroic ancient deeds:
To chant fam'd Arthur's magic tale,
And Edward, stern in sable mail;
Or wand'ring Brutus' lawless doom,
Or Brave Bonduca, scourge of Rome.

These are the themes we find constantly recurring through Warton's poetry, finding their best expression later in the odes on the *Grave of King Arthur*, and the *Crusade*.

There is some evidence, too, that the second characteristic of Warton's poetry, the portraying of nature from actual observation, already mentioned, was the result of a conscious poetical effort, even in this early work. Warton apparently recognized in rural scenes fit subjects for poetry, and subjects to which he felt his power somewhat adapted. This appears in the sonnet written at Winslade.¹⁶ After describing the native charms of the village, he referred to their poetical inspiration as better suited to his genius than more conventional themes:—

Her fairest landskips whence my Muse has drawn,
Too free with servile courtly phrase to fawn,
Too weak to try the buskin's stately strain.

II.

Warton's early and later poetical periods are in a way connected by a slight body of academic verse somewhat distinct from the rest of his poetry, and yet showing not only his characteristic qualities,—especially the love of the past which was certainly fed by the ancient glories of Oxford,—but also an otherwise almost unsuspected vein of humor. Throughout his long residence at Oxford, Warton was more than once called upon to perform poetical service for his university,—to vindicate its honor, in the *Triumph of Isis*, to contribute to the Oxford and Cambridge collections in honor of national events, and to celebrate anniversaries. In these poems are mingled the elements characteristic of the rest of his poetry. The *Triumph of Isis* is largely pseudo-classical in its use of the heroic couplet, its artificial diction—such as 'vernal bloom,' 'oliv'd portal,' 'pearly grot,' 'floating pile,' 'dalliance with the tuneful Nine,'—and in its stereotyped classical allusions. Among the Miltonic personifications of abstractions and of places mingled the deities and heroes of classical myth and history; we meet with Freedom and Gratulation, Cam and Isis, Muse and Naiad, Tully, Cato, and Eurus. But there is quite as

¹⁶ About 1750.

much mediæval coloring. Warton's characteristic love of the past appears in his celebration of ancient art,—his eulogy of Gothic architecture,—

Ye fretted pinnacles, ye fanes sublime,
Ye towers that wear the mossy vest of time ;
Ye massy piles of old munificence,
At once the pride of learning and defence ;
Ye cloisters pale, that lengthening to the sight,
To contemplation, step by step, invite ;
Ye high-arch'd walks, where oft the whispers clear
Of harps unseen have swept the poet's ear ;
Ye temples dim, where pious duty pays
Her holy hymns of ever-echoing praise ;
Lo ! your lov'd Isis, from the bordering vale,
With all a mother's fondness bids you hail !—

of old poets,¹⁷ and of early heroes whom tradition connected with the founding of the university.

There is nothing remarkable about Warton's contributions to the Oxford verses on public occasions. The *Complaint of Cherwell*, contributed to one of them, is somewhat interesting in that, although its personification and diction are of the pseudo-classical sort, its celebration of rural solitude is distinctly in the newer manner. It presents the claim of Warton's beloved Cherwell to be considered as a suitable subject for poetry, and compares her simple rustic charms and quiet solitudes with the more frequented and oft-sung beauties of Isis.

All of Warton's humorous poetry was written in his early life, and most of it appeared in his collection of many such pieces by the wits of Oxford, the *Oxford Sausage*, published in 1764. With perhaps one exception, and that the best of the group,—the *Panegyric on Oxford Ale*,—this verse belongs to the school of Pope and of Swift, though it is much more genial than most of the verse of those masters of satire. The earliest of them, the *Progress of Discontent*, was considered by Dr. Warton the best imitation of Swift that had ever appeared. It is a mild satire upon the career of many a young Englishman who, with discontented indolence rather than ambition, sought advancement through the university and church, and the story is told in

¹⁷ Warton's celebration of Chaucer during the years of his neglect is significant. Later, of course, in the *History of English Poetry*, Warton gave him the first adequate critical study.

vigorous Hudibrastic measure with considerable relish and spirit. The country parson's vain sighs for his care-free college days will serve for a sample of the whole:—

Return, ye days, when endless pleasure
I found in reading, or in leisure!
When calm around the common room
I puff'd my daily pipe's perfume!
Rode for a stomach, and inspected,
At annual bottlings, corks selected:
And din'd untax'd, untroubled, under
The portrait of our pious Founder!
When impositions were supply'd
To light my pipe— or sooth my pride—
No cares were then for forward peas,
A yearly-longing wife to please;
My thoughts no christ'ning dinners crost,
No children cry'd for butter'd toast;
And ev'ry night I went to bed,
Without a Modus in my head!

Probably the best of Warton's humorous pieces is the *Panegyric on Oxford Ale*, a burlesque of Milton's epic style after the manner of Phillip's *Splendid Shilling*. The blank verse is well managed, and the mock dignified humor well kept up throughout the poem. The models are unmistakable; there are direct allusions to both, and the poem concludes with comparing the unhappiness of the poet, whose supply of ale is cut off, with that of Adam shut out from Paradise,— a grief he professed to share in common with his master, the author of the *Splendid Shilling*:—

Thus Adam, exil'd from the beauteous scenes
Of Eden, griev'd, no more in fragrant bow'r
On fruits divine to feast, fresh shade and vale
No more to visit, or vine-mantled grot;
Thus too the matchless bard, whose lay resounds
The *Splendid Shilling's* praise, in nightly gloom
Of lonesome garret, pin'd for cheerful Ale:
Whose steps in verse Miltonic I pursue,
Mean follower: like him with honest love
Of Ale divine inspir'd, and love of song.
But long may bounteous Heav'n with watchful care
Avert his hapless lot! Enough for me
That burning with congenial flame I dar'd
His guiding steps at distance to pursue,
And sing his favorite theme in kindred strains.

The remainder of the humorous poems may be briefly dismissed. *Newmarket*, which was published anonymously in 1751, is a somewhat heavy Popeian satire. The subject is the gambling on the Newmarket races; the form is the closed couplet, with balance, antithesis, and adroit turn of the thought at the end of the couplet. The not very amusing dialogue between the *Phaeton and the One-Horse Chair* is apparently, as a reviewer in the *Monthly Review*¹⁸ observed, an imitation of Smart's fable of the *Bag-Wig and the Tobacco-Pipe*. More clever is the little *Ode to a Grizzle Wig*, in which Warton, while comparing the relative merits of bob and grizzle, frequently burlesqued the manner of Milton's minor poems with considerable relish:—

All hail, ye Curls, that, rang'd in reverend row,
 With snowy pomp my conscious shoulders hide!
 That fall beneath in venerable flow
 And crown my brows above with feathery pride!

 But thou, farewell, my Bob! whose thin-wove thatch
 Was stor'd with quips and cranks, and wanton wiles,
 That love to live within the one-curl'd Scratch,
 With fun, and all the family of smiles.

The *Castle Barber's Soliloquy* is again quite in the manner of Swift, while the *Prologue on the Old Winchester Playhouse over the Butcher's Shambles* is in more vigorous couplets than those of *Newmarket*, and is packed with alliteration and absurd antitheses. These poems and the *Oxford Newsman's Verses* were evidently dashed off with more enjoyment of the fun than poetry, and their chief merit lies in the fact that they show the poet in his most robust and genial mood.

Mant included among Warton's humorous pieces an *Epistle from Thomas Hearne, Antiquary, to the Author of the Companion to the Oxford Guide*, and on that authority it has been pretty generally accepted as written by Thomas Warton.¹⁹ But surely there were many who were loath to believe that Warton directed this clever squib at himself when the author of the *Companion* and the editor of the *Sausage* were so generally guessed

¹⁸ Vol. XCI, p. 275.

¹⁹ It is quoted among Warton's antiquarian pieces by Professor Beers: *English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 201-2.

to be the same, and who are glad to find among Joseph Warton's letters, published by Wooll, a letter to Thomas in which he calls that poem his own.²⁰ The poem is a delightful bit of fun, purporting to portray Hearne's resentment at the disrespect with which he and other antiquaries were treated in the *Companion*. He addressed Warton as—

Friend of the moss-grown spire and crumbling arch,—
and concludes with a curse upon his antiquarian studies,—

. may curses every search attend
That seems inviting! May'st thou pore in vain
For dubious door-ways! May revengeful moths
Thy ledgers eat! May chronologic spouts
Return no cypher legible! May crypts
Lurk undiscern'd! Nor may'st thou spell the names
Of Saints in storied windows! Nor the dates
Of bells discover! Nor the genuine site
Of Abbot's pantries! And may Godstowe veil,
Deep from thy eyes profane, her Gothic charms!

III.

The poems that belong to Warton's later period, that is, those that appeared for the first time in the collected edition of 1777²¹ and were presumably written after the publication of the *Oxford Sausage*, the laureate odes and other occasional later poetry, show, of course, a considerable advance over his earlier work in the direction of the new movement. There is very much less imitation of Pope and Swift, of Milton, and even of the early romanticists, Thomson, Parnell, Young; and there is

²⁰ Letter to Thos. Warton, July, 5, 1769; Wooll, *Memoirs of Joseph Warton* (1806), p. 348.

²¹ *Poems: A New Edition, with Additions*. By Thomas Warton. 1777. No collection seems to have been published before that year. An edition, called the third, was published in 1779 with the following Advertisement: "These Poems were collected and published together in 1777. Some of them had before been separately printed, to which other unprinted Pieces were then added. This is the third and a revised Edition of that Collection, with the Addition of one Piece More." Warton was preparing a corrected edition at the time of his death, and it was published in 1791. The standard edition, *The Poetical Works of the Late Thomas Warton, B.D.*, with numerous additions, including a Memoir and notes by the editor, Richard Mant, appeared in two volumes in 1802. I have not seen either a copy or a description of the implied first edition, and am inclined to think it never existed.

very much more of Warton's peculiar qualities, which had appeared in the earliest work,—the love of the past and the love of nature. Besides, these poems show somewhat the influence of contemporary romanticists, particularly of Gray.

The influence of Gray is strong in one of the most interesting and significant of Warton's later poems, the *Ode Written at Vale-Royal Abbey in Cheshire*. It is apparent throughout the poem, from the form, the elegiac quatrain, to the atmosphere of pensive melancholy which pervades it. The poem begins,—

As evening slowly spreads his mantle hoar,
No ruder sounds the bounded valley fill,
Than the faint din, from yonder sedgy shore,
Of rushing waters, and the murmuring mill,—

and continues with a scene not unlike that with which the *Elegy* opens. But there is an important difference between Gray's poem and Warton's. The former is classical and universal in its application and appeal; the scene might be any village church-yard; the conventional moralizing is exactly the sort which dignified the eighteenth century, and which makes an almost constant appeal both because of its truth and because of the perfect form which Gray gave to it. Warton, however, was describing a particular ruined abbey, and it called up in his mind—not at all given to abstract thought, moralization or philosophizing—distinct visions of the past in which he was so much interested. He delighted to reconstruct the ruined abbey, to recall its departed glories, to dwell on the themes so dear to him, its architecture, its learning, its minstrelsy and its romance:—

Here ancient Art her dædal fancies play'd
In the quaint mazes of the crisped roof;
In mellow glooms the speaking pane array'd,
And rang'd the cluster'd column, massy proof.

Here Learning, guarded from a barbarous age,
Hover'd awhile, nor dar'd attempt the day;
But patient trac'd upon the pictur'd page
The holy legend, or heroic lay.

Hither the solitary minstrel came
An honour'd guest, while the grim evening sky
Hung lowering, and around the social flame
Tun'd his bold harp to tales of chivalry.

This love of the past, this revival of mediæval glories especially, which occasionally showed in the early poems and appeared more strongly in many of his later ones, connects Warton most closely with the romantic movement, and constitutes his most important contribution to it. Warton's mediæval poems have also a closer relation to his other literary work; they give expression to the same master passion that urged him, as critic and historian, to exploit the beauties of Spenser and the forgotten poets of early English literature. In two of Warton's best and most characteristic odes he concerned himself wholly with the past. These very romantic poems are the *Crusade* and the *Grave of King Arthur*. The first purports to be the song that Richard Cœur de Lion and Blondel de Nesle composed together, by which the minstrel was able to discover his master in prison. The poem has a fine swing, from the beginning of the song—

Syrian virgins, wail and deep,
English Richard ploughs the deep!—

to the defiant close—

We bid those spectre-shapes avaunt,
Ashtaroath, and Termagaunt!
With many a demon, pale of hue,
Doom'd to drink the bitter dew
That drops from Macon's sooty tree,
Mid the dread grove of ebony.
Nor magic charms, nor fiends of hell,
The christian's holy courage quell.
Salem, in ancient majesty
Arise, and lift thee to the sky!
Soon on thy battlements divine
Shall wave the badge of Constantine.
Ye Barons, to the sun unfold
Our Cross with crimson wove and gold!

The favorite ode, however, will always be *The Grave of King Arthur*, in which a story of the national British hero of romance is skilfully set into a brilliant framework of mediæval splendor. Warton explained in a short preface that the story was adapted from the Chronicle of Glastonbury and dealt with a Welsh tradition that Arthur was not carried away to Avalon after the battle of Camlan but was received by monks and buried before the high altar in Glastonbury Cathedral. This story,

told to Henry II by Welsh bards at Cilgarran castle, induced him to go to the abbey, find the grave, and, as the ode has it, establish a chantry at its shrine. The description of the feast with which the poem opens is gorgeously romantic, and splendidly suggests the great mediævalist of the next century, Sir Walter Scott, who was foreshadowed in several respects by this first mediæval enthusiast. Warton's richness and harmony of diction, his stirring and vigorous appeal to the imagination were continued, but scarcely eclipsed, in the poems of his great successor:—

Stately the feast, and high the cheer :
 Girt with many an armed peer,
 And canopied with golden pall,
 Amid Cilgarran's castle hall,
 Sublime in formidable state,
 And warlike splendour, Henry sate ;
 Prepar'd to stain the briny flood
 Of Shannon's lakes with rebel blood.
 Illumining the vaulted roof,
 A thousand torches flam'd aloof :
 From massy cups, with golden gleam
 Sparkled the red metheglin's stream :
 To grace the gorgeous festival,
 Along the lofty-window'd hall,
 The storied tapestry was hung :
 With minstrelsy the rafters rung
 Of harps, that with reflected light
 From the proud gallery glitter'd bright :
 While gifted bards, a rival throng,
 (From distant Mona, nurse of song,
 From Teivi, fring'd with umbrage brown,
 From Elvy's vale, and Cader's crown,
 From many a shaggy precipice
 That shades Ierne's hoarse abyss,
 And many a sunless solitude
 Of Radnor's inmost mountains rude),
 To crown the banquet's solemn close,
 Themes of British glory chose.

Warton's love of the past was the inspiration also of three sonnets. Two of them were inspired by relics of the very early history of England: one by King Arthur's Round Table, hanging in the old Norman castle at Winchester, and the other the mysterious monument, of "wondrous origine" unknown, Stonehenge on Salisbury plain.

The third of the mediæval group, the most interesting of Warton's sonnets, if not the most interesting of all his poems, because it affords so characteristic a glimpse of the poet-scholar, is the one *Written in a Blank Leaf of Dugdale's Monasticon*. It has for its subject the delightful, the æsthetic side of antiquarian study. That aspect made to Warton an appeal quite as strong as the scholarly one; it was an influence as potent in poetry and art as the other was in history and scholarship. The antiquary has never had a better defence and justification than the following lines:—

Deem not, devoid of elegance, the Sage,
By Fancy's genuine feelings unbeguil'd,
Of painful pedantry the poring child ;
Who turns, of these proud domes, th' historic page,
Now sunk by Time, and Henry's fiercer rage.
Think'st thou the warbling Muses never smil'd
On his lone hours? Ingenuous views engage
His thoughts, on themes, unclassic falsely stil'd,
Intent. While cloister'd Piety displays
Her mouldering roll, the piercing eye explores
New manners, and the pomp of elder days,
Whence culls the pensive bard his pictur'd stores.
Nor rough, nor barren, are the winding ways
Of hoar Antiquity, but strown with flowers.

The same note of interest in the past is struck rather frequently but never so forcibly in his last poems, the laureate odes. Aside from this element, the odes have very little merit indeed. They are dignified, conventional, but often perfunctory. Warton was not interested in contemporary events, and George III made no great imaginative appeal; so Warton, like many another laureate, took refuge in singing the glories of English heroes of the past,—of Alfred, and the British legacy of liberty; of William Conqueror, and the barons who obtained Magna Charta; of Edward and the victories in France; and in lauding his great predecessors, the laureates of England.

These celebrations of ancient days, together with Warton's neglect of the ostensible subjects of his odes, were cleverly ridiculed by "Peter Pindar," a poet whose coarse but frequently humorous satires were more successful than his serious verse. In *Ode upon Ode* he parodied Warton's celebration of the past;

in *An Expostulatory Epistle from Brother Peter to Brother Tom*, derided Warton's neglect of the present, and in his *Advice to the Future Laureate*,²² written after the death of Warton, he pointed with some cleverness to his learning as the cause of his ill success as a laureate:—

Tom prov'd unequal to the Laureat's place ;
 Luckless, he warbled with an Attic grace :
 The language was not understood at Court,
 Where bow and curt'sy, grin and shrug, resort ;
 Tom was a scholar — luckless wight !
 Lodg'd with old manners in a musty college ;
 He knew not that a Palace hated knowledge,
 And deem'd it pedantry to spell and write.
 Tom heard of royal libraries, indeed,
 And, weakly, fancied that the books were *read*.

The second important characteristic of Warton's poetry, the interest in natural scenes as the subject of poetry, which had been in his early period largely colored by the influence of Milton and of Spenser, was almost equally conspicuous in his later work. In the later poems, however, although he was still slightly under their influence, and justified his selection of such subjects from the practice of these favorite poets, it is pretty evident that he was painting directly from nature. The following short passage shows the closeness of Warton's observation of simple details which the pseudo-classicist would have thought beneath a poet's notice:—

Scant along the ridgy land
 The beams their new-born ranks expand :
 The fresh-turn'd soil with tender blades
 Thinly the sprouting barley shades :
 Fringing the forest's devious edge,
 Half rob'd appears the hawthorn hedge ;
 Or to the distant eye displays
 Weakly green its budding sprays.

The modernity of Warton's poetry in which the rustic delights of simple life are celebrated is attested by the fact that his *Hamlet: An Ode written in Whichwood Forest*, was republished in 1859 with fourteen etchings by Birket Foster, a popular engraver, who made illustrations for editions of Milton, Goldsmith, Scott

²² Pindar's *Works*, Vol. I, p. 382 ; Vol. II, pp. 61, 445-6.

and Wordsworth, and that a second edition was called for in 1876. Yet, for all its 'softness' and 'sweetness,' the poem is not one of Warton's best efforts.

Warton's interest in nature as the subject for poetry is also shown in two sonnets as reactionary in the direction of the return to nature as the mediæval sonnets were in that of the return to the past, and almost as important as contributions to the new poetry. One of these is a study of nature and moods, in furtherance of which the poet assumed the contrast between the hopeful and the disappointed lover. It is apparent that at least the changeful Surry landscape was real, whatever the state of the feelings in which it was viewed:—

While summer-suns o'er the gay prospect play'd,
Through Surry's verdant scenes, where Epsom spreads
Mid intermingling elms her flowery meads,
And Hascombe's hill, in towering groves array'd,
Rear'd its romantic steep, with mind serene,
I journey'd blithe. Full pensive I return'd ;
For now my breast with hopeless passion burn'd,
Wet with hoar mists appear'd the gaudy scene,
Which late in careless indolence I pass'd ;
And Autumn all around those hues had cast
Where past delight my recent grief might trace.
Sad change, that Nature a congenial gloom
Should wear, when most, my cheerless mood to chase,
I wish'd her green attire, and wonted bloom!

The second nature sonnet, *To the River Lodon*, is even more interesting, intrinsically as well as historically. Although one is not always justified in interpreting poetry biographically, and though Warton was extremely reticent, I cannot but find in this sonnet something of that personal note which was characteristic of the new poetry. It is in the mood of melancholy retrospection that was so congenial a vein to Warton's pupil, William Lisle Bowles. A somewhat similar idea is developed in Coleridge's *Sonnet to the River Otter*, and less distinctly, in Wordsworth's sequence on the River Duddon:—

Ah! what a weary race my feet have run,
Since first I trod thy banks with alders crown'd,
And thought my way was all thro' fairy ground,
Beneath thy azure sky, and golden sun :
Where first my Muse to lisp her notes begun !

While pensive Memory traces back the round,
 Which fills the varied interval between ;
 Much pleasure, more of sorrow, marks the scene.
 Sweet native stream ! those skies and suns so pure
 No more return, to cheer my evening road !
 Yet still one joy remains, that not obscure,
 Nor useless, all my vacant days have flow'd,
 From youth's gay dawn to manhood's prime mature ;
 Nor with the Muse's laurel unbestow'd.

Quite as important for the new movement in poetry as the mediæval and nature-poems, was Warton's use of the sonnet form. In the collected edition of his poems were nine sonnets, of which two had been published previously. The use of this form at this time, when the sonnet revival was just beginning, is extremely significant. Before Warton's sonnets appeared, Mason, Stillingfleet and Edwards had written each a few sonnets, so that the whole credit for its revival cannot be claimed for any one of them.²³ But certainly Warton looms larger than any of the rest, both because of his greater influence and because of the superior merit of his sonnets. As the friend and tutor of Bowles, Warton's influence upon his poetry was considerable, and was probably by him carried on to the major poets of the next century, to Coleridge, and possibly even to Wordsworth.²⁴

It is evident enough from the three sonnets which have been quoted that Warton was not master of the form. Although he followed in general the Miltonic model, he seldom observed the pause at the end of the octave; his rhymes do not occur regularly; and they are frequently defective. But that a man of letters of Warton's prominence should adopt the sonnet form and put it to the romantic uses he did,—setting forth the glories of antiquity and something of the "renascence of wonder," reflecting natural beauties and the poet's meditation upon them,—was more important than correctness of form for the history of poetry. The anonymous author of a sheaf of sonnets published

²³ See Mason's *Works* (1811), Vol. I, pp. 121-124 and ded. Sonnet; Gray's *Works*, ed. Gosse, Vol. I, p. 110; Phelps's *Romantic Movement*, pp. 45-6; *Mod. Lang. Notes*, Vol. XX, pp. 97-8.

²⁴ Besides the possibility of some connection between the river odes on Lodon, Otter and Duddon, the Warton lover hears a familiar note in Wordsworth's title *Written in a Blank Leaf of Macpherson's Ossian*.

in 1776 was surer of his rhymes, but there was nothing new in his themes, and he belonged to the old school rather than to the reaction.

Classical characteristics are not so obvious in Warton's poetry as love of the past and of nature. Although it is difficult to point out particular instances of classical influence in his poetry, the careful reader gains from the whole a definite impression that the writer was thoroughly familiar with the best poetry of classical antiquity and alive to its characteristic beauties. Mant, the editor of Warton's poems, pointed out a number of parallels to passages from such classical poets as Theocritus and Pindar, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, and Lucretius. Some few of the poems were, indeed, frank imitations from Horace and Theocritus. But Warton's classicism was not so clearly manifested in imitations from classical poetry or allusions to it as in his recognition of the fact that there is no inevitable antipathy between the classical spirit and Gothic poetry; that they have in common that imaginative quality which is so distinguishing a characteristic of the mediæval romances, and which the poets of a pseudo-classical age lost by too close an adherence to the form, instead of an independent recognition of the spirit, of classical antiquity. Much of Warton's own poetry, therefore, dealt with mediæval subjects with the deliberate purpose of restoring by that means this essential quality of great poetry which had disappeared in an age of reason.

Because he recognized the close relation between the mediæval and the classical spirit, Warton distinctly resented, in the sonnet on Dugdale's *Monasticon*, the designation of antiquarian studies as 'unclassic.' And in the *Verses on Sir Josua Reynolds's Painted Window* he pointed out the possibility of a relation between the spirit of the Middle Ages and that of classical antiquity, as illustrated, in this instance, by their application to ecclesiastical architecture. Reynolds, as a typical representative of the eighteenth-century school of art, saw a real incompatibility between the "softer touch," the "chaste design," the "just proportion" and the "faultless forms of elegance and grace" of classical art, and the "vaulted dome" and "fretted shrines," the "hues romantic" that "ting'd the gorgeous pane,"

—the “Gothic art” of ancient magnificence: the acceptance of one meant for him the denial of the other. Not so with Warton, whose feeling was all for their essential unity.

The common suggestion that Warton’s profession of conversion to the classical school of art, his profession that he had been—

For long, enamour’d of a barbarous age,
A faithless truant to the classic page,—

was probably not quite whole-hearted and did not even deceive the friend to whom it was addressed, does not reveal the full significance of the poem. Its importance in this connection is neither its generous recognition of the beauties of Attic art, nor even the more extended and sympathetic description of the magic of Gothic art, but the suggestion of the possibility of combining classical and mediæval ideals to the advantage of both. With a just sense of their characteristic beauties, the greater naturalness and universality of one, the stronger appeal to the imagination of the other, Warton realized that in art, as in poetry, perfection lay in their union, and therefore he proposed that the great classical artist should —

. . . . add new lustre to religious light :
Not of its pomp to strip this ancient shrine,
But bid that pomp with purer radiance shine :
With arts unknown before, to reconcile
The willing Graces to the Gothic pile.

IV.

Interesting as Warton’s poetry is in showing his own development from pseudo-classical to pretty romantic ideals, and valuable as much of it is intrinsically, its greatest importance, of course, is to the student of literary history as a factor in the development of the new movement. The influence of the romantic poetry of this laureate poet can scarcely be, and certainly has not been, overestimated, though it has not always been altogether overlooked. “If any man may be called the father of the present race,” wrote Southey in the *Quarterly* in 1824, “it is Thomas Warton, a scholar by profession, an antiquary and a poet by choice,” and he called Warton’s school the “true English school.”²⁵ He mentioned as his first pupils Bampfylde and

²⁵ Vol. XXXI, p. 289.

Russell, to whom he should have added Headley and Bowles. It is significant of Warton's importance as a poet that his influence should have been thus recognized so late in the romantic movement. This little group of young poets who gathered about Warton at Trinity, or took up his manner elsewhere, all belonged to the group of nature-poets; they carried forward that tradition and joined hands with the new school. It is noteworthy, too, that they were active in promoting the use of the sonnet form which their master used. In both of these respects, of course, they were exactly in the line of the poetical development of the age, which culminated in the work of Wordsworth.

The other line of romantic development which passed through Warton, and which, indeed, may be said to have originated there, the revival of the spirit of the past in poetry, found its best exponent in Sir Walter Scott. Scott's poetry represents the flowering of the Gothic and mediæval qualities which were present in a less perfect form in one group of Warton's poems. The similarity of temper and interests in the two men, and Scott's familiarity with Warton's work show the influence of Warton upon the younger poet as certainly as such things can be shown. Quotations from Warton appear in the chapter headings of his works and upon the title-page of his *Scottish Minstrelsy*:—

The songs, to savage virtue dear,
That won of yore the public ear!
Ere Polity, sedate and sage,
Had quench'd the fires of feudal rage.

While it would be too much to claim that Warton alone inspired in Scott the enthusiasm for the past which characterizes his stirring mediæval poems; that he began and passed on to Wordsworth by way of Bowles the meditative description of simple natural objects; or that he was responsible for the sonnet revival;²⁶ it is only just to say that he both represented and furthered to an important extent these incipient tendencies in eighteenth-century poetry.

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²⁶ T. H. Ward says this last in his introduction to Warton in his *English Poets*, Vol. III, p. 383.